



Fort Harrison State Park

Visitor Center & Museum of 20th Century Warfare

2012 Environmental Education School Programs

Now available for Pre-K to High School

Programs compliment National School Standards



Where nature and history come together...

Fort Harrison State Park, established in 1996, is located in Marion County. It consists of 1,700 acres of woodlands, prairie and wetlands and water landscapes, along with 11 miles of multi-purpose trails available year-round. Ft. Harrison State Park contains the last unfragmented woodland tract in Central Indiana greater than 100 acres. This large high quality and relatively undisturbed forest block provides the ecological foundation in which the federally-endangered Indiana bat, rare plant species, great blue heron rookeries, sensitive fish, neotropical bird migrants and other valuable resources exist.

Ft. Harrison State Park is essentially a cultural artifact preserved as open space on the military post. Over the years, this green space has become an island of natural areas in a sea of urban development. This undeveloped area will be treasured for the relaxation and interaction visitors may experience with their natural and cultural heritage.

Wetlands are an important part of the Ft. Harrison State Park environment. They help maintain water quality and plant diversity, provide habitat for wildlife and contribute to the enjoyment of these resources by park visitors.

An unusual number of neotropical migrant birds use the unfragmented woodlands of Ft. Harrison in their annual migrations from the tropics in the winter to the breeding areas of temperate North America. These unbroken forests provide protective cover, nesting sites and food sources for the birds on their journeys.

Fort Benjamin Harrison (1903-1995) was built out of sentiment to maintain a functional U.S. Army installation in the shadow of the former Indianapolis Arsenal downtown that was instrumental in supplying arms to Union Troops during the Civil War. The Fort played a major induction and training role in every major military conflict of the 20th Century, including World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam and the Gulf War. It became “the home of the Army dollar” in the 1950’s with the establishment of the U.S. Army Finance Center, a building second in size only to the Pentagon.

World War II Prisoners of War (POW) were held in Camp Glenn (now the park office, nature center, environmental education center and museum), originally built for the Civilian Military Training Camp (1935-40). One group of prisoners was from Italy, the other was a group of Germans from the North African campaign. German prisoners built the Officers’ Club (now known as The Garrison).

Humans have inhabited the Ft. Harrison region for thousands of years from postglacial climates to the present. Change has been the response of people to the landscape and the response of the landscape and its wild inhabitants to the influence of different cultures and their economies. Native American populations, European settlers, the U.S. Army and the people of the surrounding communities have all had roles in this sweeping change through time.

In addition to regular public programs such as those found on the monthly program schedule, the Interpretive Naturalist staff & Museum staff at Fort Harrison State park offers private programming to school , scouts and other groups by reservation. These programs can be done on-site at Fort Harrison State Park or they may be off-site and brought directly to you at your school and/or meeting site.

The following programs are just an example of the many natural and cultural programs the Interpretive Naturalist staff and Museum staff can bring to your classroom. Additional programs on other topics can be designed to meet your specific needs and the needs of your students. We can incorporate your current class curriculum into any interpretive program; whether it’s hands-on nature, history, wildlife sciences, resource conservation & environmental management and so much more. The Interpretive staff can facilitate programs utilizing Project WET, Project WILD, Project Learning Tree and Go FishIN as well as Indiana Geology.

Program costs are just \$2.00 per person for off-site programs OR \$1.00 per person for on-site and the entrance fee is waived. Please allow at least two weeks advanced notice when making your reservation.

For more information on our programs or to make a reservation, contact the Fort Harrison Visitors’ Center Interpretive Staff at (317) 591-0122.

Let's Talk about Fire with Smokey Bear

Meet Smokey Bear and learn why it's important to prevent wildfires as well as the importance of prescribed forest fires.

Program availability: Year-round

Age Group: All Ages

Length: 60 minutes per group



History of Fort Benjamin Harrison

From the days the U.S. Army began training in preparation for World War I to its short life as a U.S. Air Force Base to the Soldiers of Desert Storm to becoming a beautiful place of relaxation and enjoyment, Fort Benjamin Harrison State Park has a rich vibrant military lineage and a growing love of nature as one of the newer Indiana State Parks.

Program availability: Year-round

Age Group: All Ages

Length: 60 minutes per group

Wild About Worms

Meet Ernie the Earthworm and learn about the role of worms have in our environment. Get hands-on and dirty with a group of Ernie's worm friends. Learn all about worm biology & history. Also learn how to set up your very own worm compost (vermicompost) for your classroom.

Program availability: Year-round

Age Group: Pre-School – 1st Grade

Length: 45-60 minutes per group



Whose Track is This?

What animal made that track? Learn to quickly and easily identify common Indiana mammals and birds by studying the footprints they leave behind. Find out why tracks are different and what tracks reveal about their maker. Everyone will create a track booklet to take on their next hike or camping trip.

Optional Extension– Make a track cast.

Program availability: Year-round

Age Group: Kindergarten – 4th Grade

Length: 45-60 minutes per group

Hiding In Plain Sight

From Nature to Military Combo Program – Many animals have adapted for survival by using camouflage. Throughout history it has been necessary for the military to perfect the art of camouflage or hiding in order to keep them safe. Adapted from nature many patterns are easily recognizable while others are a bit more surprising. Learn what nature and the military have in common when it comes to camouflage and survival.

Program availability: Year-round

Age Group: Kindergarten – 6th Grade

Length: 60 minutes per group





A Cover for All Uses

In the military hats and helmets, more commonly called covers, have a variety of uses ranging from protection to identification to utility. We will look at many varieties of covers and explore the many uses of steel pots.

Program availability: Year-round

Age Group: Kindergarten – 12th Grade

Length: 60 minutes per group

The Incredible Journey

Do you know where the water that you could be drinking this morning will be tomorrow? Students learn about the water cycle and the different states of water through their journey as a water molecule.

Program availability: Year-round

Age Group: 3rd - 8th Grade

Length: 60 minutes per group



Camping Military Style

Many modern survival gear items and camping items have evolved from technology used in the military – from light sleeping bags to warmer clothes to stronger gear – the military and soldiers are the ultimate campers.

Program availability: Year-round

Age Group: 8th – 12th Grade

Length: 60 minutes per group

Much Too Do With Poo

Did you ever think it was important to look at different animals poop to find out if they are healthy? Learn how to identify the scat of some of our more common Indiana animals.

Optional Extension– Scat Snack (possible food allergies – chocolate, peanuts, milk)

Program availability: Year-round

Age Group: 2nd – 8th Grade

Length: 60 minutes per group



Let's Talk Turkey

Did you know that Benjamin Franklin made a plea before the Continental Congress to have the Wild Turkey be named our national bird? Once a game bird almost hunted to extinction, the Wild Turkey has made a comeback. Learn all about our Indiana Wild Turkeys –from anatomy to habitat.

Optional Extension – Turkey craft for younger age children

Program availability: Year-round (but November is the best time)

Age Group: All Ages

Length: 60 minutes per group



Who's Who-o-o-o-o?

From the Great Horned Owl to the Eastern Screech Owl; from the Barn Owl to the Barred Owl; learn about the nine different owls that we have here in Indiana.

Optional Extension– Owl Pellets

Program availability: Year-round

Age Group: 3rd – 8th Grade

Length: 60 minutes per group

Poisonous vs. Venomous

Learn the difference between what is poisonous and what is venomous. Learn about our most common poisonous plants and our venomous snakes and spiders that we have here in Indiana.

Program availability: Year-round

Age Group: All Ages

Length: 60 minutes per group



Let's Get Batty with Indiana Bats

Learn about the different bats that call Indiana home. Also learn about the White Nose Syndrome that our bat populations are dealing with and what we are doing to preserve them.

Program availability: Year-round

Age Group: 3rd Grade & up

Length: 60 minutes per group

Building a Museum

When building a museum collection there are four basic ways that museums begin and maintain their collections – donations, exchanges, purchasing and finding. This program looks at examples of each method as the students build their own museum.

(Economics based curriculum)

Program availability: Year-round

Age Group: 4th Grade & Up

Length: 60 minutes per group



From ALL of US to ALL of YOU

It's always hard being away from home especially for our active military. This is a wonderful heartfelt opportunity for children of all ages to write letters and draw pictures to be sent to our soldiers through Operation Gratitude.

Optional Extension: Flag Folding – There is an important sequence of steps to properly folding & storing the U.S. flag. This extension will demo those steps and give you the opportunity to fold a flag for our active troops.

Program availability: Year-round

Age Group: All Ages

Length: 60 minutes per group

